THE CHARGE

GIVEN TO

Mr. William Moſs *of* Buckingham,
Mr. Matthew Leeſon *of* Thame,
AND
Mr. William Willets *of* Prince's Risborough,

At their

ORDINATION

AT

AILSBURY,

IN THE

County of *BUCKS*;

On *June* 11. 1724.

By JOHN TROUGHTON.

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TO THE READER.

THE following Exhortation comes abroad, in company of Dr. Calamy's elaborate Sermon on the ſame occaſion, at the unanimous requeſt of a great number of worthy miniſters then preſent. A ſudden indiſpoſition having prevented my continuance ſo far in the pleaſant work of that day, as to hear it delivered; the reverend author hath been pleaſed to gratify my deſire with the liberty of peruſing it before it was made publick: And therefore

therefore I chuſe in this way to give him my hearty thanks for the common ſervice he hath done therein, by inſtructions, admonitions and encouragements ſo ſuitable to all his brethren, whether of a longer or a later ſtanding in the ſacred miniſtry; and beg leave to add my hearty prayers, that this ſerious diſcourſe may leave the deepeſt and moſt laſting impreſſions, not only on all of us who were concerned in the late ordination, but upon all others of our brethren into whoſe hands it may come; that we may take heed to the miniſtry which we have received of the LORD, that we fulfill it.

JOHN EVANS.

London,
June 30. 1724.

THE

THE CHARGE.

Beloved Brethren,

OU have been now ſet apart to the work of the miniſtry, in the way preſcribed by our Lord JESUS CHRIST, who is the king, and head of the church. You have received authority from him [illegible] name, to diſpence his gospel; and have been recommended to his grace. You have devoted yourſelves in a ſolemn manner to his ſervice. And as this does draw very great obligations after it, ſo it is my work, and ſhall be my endeavour, with the divine aſſiſtance, to enforce them upon you in the beſt manner I can, to excite your endeavours ſo to

act as that you may honour him who hath ſent you, that the ends of your miniſtry may be anſwered, that you may have peace and ſatisfaction in your own conſciences, and that you may give an account of your miniſtry with joy at the great day. You cannot preſerve your character without anſwering the obligations which it lays upon you. However perſons may value themſelves upon their character as miniſters, and whatever reſpect they may look for from others, if they do not anſwer it in that way which JESUS CHRIST has directed, they are certainly ſome of the vileſt and moſt contemptible perſons in the world.

YOUR office is honourable, as you do ſtand ſo nearly related therein to JESUS CHRIST, who is over all GOD bleſſed for ever, and as it relates to thoſe things which are of the greateſt importance in themſelves, and the neareſt concernment to mankind. It is converſant about no leſs matters than thoſe which JESUS CHRIST himſelf was converſant about. Miniſters are called
2 Cor. vi. 1. *workers together with him.* But it is an office of labour and care too, an office which calls for the exerciſe of all your grace, prudence, skill and diligence; and in the diſcharge of which you will have need of more than common aſſiſtance. It is a work which no one would undertake, but upon the proſpect of aſſiſtance from him whom he ſerves in it.

YOU have taken the miniſtry upon you in a way in which you can expect no great encouragement from the world. In a way which is treated very contemptuously by many. In a way which many do induſtriouſly ſet themſelves to oppoſe, and even to ridicule. Whether they do herein act a part that is pleaſing to JESUS CHRIST, and that does ſerve the intereſt of religion, muſt be left to their own conſciences. But if you can herein approve yourſelves to JESUS CHRIST, to your own conſciences, and to the

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conſciences of others; if you can herein ſerve the intereſt of religion and the ſouls of men; if herein GOD owns you, it will be a ſufficient ſatisfaction to you of the validity of your call, and will bear you up under all diſcouragements and oppoſitions whatſoever.

I SHALL not take up ſo much of your time, as to go through the ſeveral parts of your work ſo particularly as might be done. I cannot give myſelf leave to think you have need to be inſtructed in it. I take it for granted, that you have endeavoured to know and to ſtudy it, and to get your hearts poſſeſſed with a ſence of it, before you came to the work of this day. I cannot ſo much as ſuppoſe, that you have engaged in the work blindly and inconſiderately, without weighing what you have engaged yourſelves to do. But you will readily allow me to be your remembrancer; and to preſs that upon you, which our great LORD and MASTER has given you in charge.

IT will let you a great way into the nature and extent of your work, to obſerve and conſider by what names the miniſters of the goſpel are diſtinguiſhed and characterized in the Scriptures. They are called *overſeers, watchmen, ſhepherds, ſtewards of the myſteries of God, labourers*, &c. Theſe are the characters which you moſt frequently meet with. By conſidering what theſe names ſignify, and what is included in them, your own thoughts will ſuggeſt to you what you ought to do, and with what temper and views you ought to act in the various parts of your office.

BUT perhaps we may give you a more juſt idea of your work by leading you to the conſideration of what JESUS CHRIST was. JESUS CHRIST, who is the *great ſhepherd of the ſheep*, was himſelf a miniſter. By conſidering how he acted, you will know how you muſt act. None can be ſo fit a pattern for you as he. He was prophet, prieſt,

and king in his church, and ſuch muſt you be in your ſphere, and according to your meaſure. In ſome parts of his office indeed he cannot be imitated; it is beyond the power and capacity of any creature: But wherein he is imitable, you muſt think yourſelves obliged to imitate him.

He was a prophet in his church; he was a preacher. He made it his main buſineſs to preach; and it was that which took up the greateſt part of his time, and which was his delight. And what was his preaching? As far as the account we have of it will ſerve us, we may gather that it was plain and familiar, ſolid and ſubſtantial, cloſe and convincing. 'Twas plain and familiar, adapted to the capacity of his hearers. It was ſolid and ſubſtantial, containing thoſe things which were neceſſary, and moſt conducive to the ſalvation of thoſe to whom he preached. And it was cloſe and convincing, what tended to the awakening of the conſcience, and to warm the heart. His ſtudy and care were to ſpeak not that which might pleaſe and delight the ear, but what might profit. This you muſt do; you are to *preach the word*, to *be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon*, to *reprove, rebuke, exhort*. You muſt preach plainly, ſubſtantially, that which is *to the uſe of edifying*, the moſt neceſſary truths of religion. And you muſt endeavour to preach convincingly, what tends to the awakening the conſcience, and what is likely to be moſt influential upon practice, that the hearts and lives of your hearers may be formed according to the goſpel-doctrine and rule.

2 Tim. iv. 2.

I CANNOT more properly than under this head of teaching, mention catechizing, a very laudable and uſeful practice. Altho' this is incumbent on parents and maſters of families, and is that which they ſhould be earneſtly urged to; yet it belongs to miniſters alſo, and ſhould not be omitted by them, and you muſt make it a part of your work, and give all encouragement to perſons to attend upon it. It is what many have

bleſſed

bleſſed GOD for, and have owned that thoſe ſeeds have been planted in their hearts thereby, that have been of uſe to them as long as they have lived. Hereby you will better prepare them for profiting by your preaching. In this you have to do with the younger ſort, of whom particular care ought to be taken. A ſpecial regard, I ſay, ought to be had to the riſing generation to ſeaſon them well. It is from them that our hopes are. There can be but little hope of the continuance of the intereſt of vital religion in the world, (humanly ſpeaking) if theſe are neglected, and a due care be not taken to *train them up in the nurture and admonition of the* LORD. I believe it will be found upon obſervation, that ſince this practice has been more uſed, a great deal more good has been done upon young ones than was formerly. And therefore I do earneſtly recommend it to you. And I can the better do it, as having experienced in ſome meaſure the good effects of it.

CHRIST was a prieſt in his church; a prieſt not only in offering a ſacrifice, but in interceding for them, in offering up prayers and ſupplications to GOD for them. He often bare them upon his heart before his heavenly Father, and recommended them to him. This you muſt be in your capacity. Prieſts in the firſt ſenſe you cannot be, nor is there any need that you ſhould be; but in the other part you muſt imitate him. You muſt be conſtant interceſſors with GOD for your people, and recommend them to his bleſſing. You muſt be continually offering up prayers and ſupplications to the GOD of all grace for them. And to this end you muſt endeavour, as much as in you lies, to be acquainted with their ſtate. You cannot deal with GOD ſo particularly in their behalf, as you ſhould do, without this.

JESUS CHRIST is king in his church. And he does execute this office towards it, not only in giving laws and ordinances to it, but in guid-

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ing, directing, defending, ſupporting, &c. In this part of his office you are to imitate him in ſome meaſure. Miniſters are appointed to be rulers in the church in ſubordination to JESUS CHRIST.

Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Theſſ. v. 12. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves*, ſays the apoſtle: And he ſpeaks of miniſters as being *over them in the* LORD. JESUS CHRIST has not inveſted any with an authority of making laws for his church. He has made ſufficient proviſion in that reſpect already. He that foreſaw all emergencies whatſoever, was capable of making proviſion againſt them all; and it is certain that he has done ſo. It would not have been conſiſtent with his wiſdom or goodneſs to have left ſuch a matter as this to ignorant and corrupt men. This is what is pretended to by ſome; but they muſt bring better proof of it than hitherto they have done. We utterly diſclaim all dominion over the faith and conſciences of men, and look upon all exerciſe of authority of this nature to be no better than uſurpation. We pretend to nothing more than to urge CHRIST's laws upon the conſciences of men. But you are to watch over your people, to obſerve their behaviour; you are to direct them, you are to defend them to the utmoſt of your power againſt every thing that may be prejudicial to their ſouls. And you are to exerciſe that diſcipline which JESUS CHRIST has appointed.

THIS is a ſhort ſcheme of your work, with this addition, that you are carefully to adminiſter the ſeals of the covenant in their proper ſeaſon.

BUT let it be obſerved, that when I ſay, that I have given you a ſcheme of your work, I mean chiefly as to your publick work. There is ſomething more to be done by you. You have a great deal to do in private. The work of the miniſtry muſt not be ſuppoſed to be confined to publick adminiſtrations. It muſt be granted, that theſe are the principal parts; and he that acquits himſelf well in theſe reſpects, will acquire to himſelf

ſelf a great deal of reputation and comfort. But they are very much miſtaken, who think that they have fully diſcharged their truſt in theſe things. You are to viſit your flock with diligence and care. You are to enquire into the condition of every particular member, as far as you can: To enquire after the fruit and ſucceſs of your publick labours among them. You muſt enquire after their behaviour and order in their families; into what of religion is practiſed and kept up there. You are to exhort and warn them; and to reprove too when there is occaſion. Oftentimes private admonitions and reproofs do more good than publick ones. A publick reproof perſons may put off, as thinking it does not belong to them: But private ones come more cloſe to the conſcience, and they cannot avoid the efficacy of them. You are to enquire into their troubles and afflictions: There you may adviſe and encourage them, and help them in a right improvement of them. You ſhould take frequent opportunity to pray with them and for them; you are to viſit the ſick and dying; you ſhould not only readily go when they ſend for you, but of your own accord: When perſons are on a ſick bed, and have a nearer view of eternity, it is a very proper ſeaſon of being uſeful to them. In dealing with perſons under ſuch circumſtances, you muſt uſe a great deal of caution: You muſt endeavour to be ſatisfied concerning their caſe, that you may apply yourſelves ſuitably thereunto. Some will need to be encouraged; others will need to be awakened, and to be taken off from thoſe falſe grounds of hope, which they have built upon. And you muſt uſe a great deal of care herein. The carelesneſs and miſmanagement of ſome in this reſpect, has been, as is to be feared, to the diſſervice of many ſouls. Many have been buoyed up with falſe hopes, and have been ſent into eternity under a deluſion. We do not indeed find any particular direction given in the Scriptures about this; but it has always been looked upon by wiſe and good men as a great

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part of a miniſter's work: And it is eaſy to obſerve, that the generality of people expect it from their miniſters.

HAVING mentioned theſe things; we ſhall proceed to recommend that to you, which is neceſſary to render your miniſtry ſucceſsfull. Having taken it upon you, your great concern ſhould be that you may be uſeful in it, that the ends of your miniſtry may be attained. Altho' it is GOD alone that can make you uſeful, and give you ſucceſs, yet is there ſomething to be done on your part, which has a tendency to further your uſefulneſs: and this is what I would preſs upon you.

LABOUR to have an experimental acquaintance with the great truths of religion: To feel the power and efficacy of them upon your hearts. When you know them experimentally, you will ſpeak of them the more ſeriouſly and affectionately, and will be more likely to make ſuitable impreſſions upon thoſe that hear you. That perſon whoſe own heart is not warmed with the truths which he delivers, who has not a ſavour and reliſh of them, is never likely to ſpeak of them, ſo as to convey any warmth into the hearts of others. Such a one cannot ſpeak of them but coldly and formally, and that has no tendency to produce any good effects. Through the notional knowledge of them you may be able to ſpeak of them intelligibly, and ſo as to inform the judgment, and to convince the reaſon of thoſe that hear you: But without a ſavoury and experimental knowledge of them, you will not enliven their hearts. When a miniſter ſpeaks of the things of GOD coldly and formally, he will lay a temptation before his hearers to think that he does not believe them himſelf. And how then can he work ſuch a belief of them in them, that is likely to make any impreſſion upon them? And it is impoſſible they ſhould be otherwiſe ſpoken of, when the power

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of them is not felt within. Some indeed have an art of ſetting off in a lively manner what they underſtand little of, and feel leſs of: But all the good they do is to work upon the paſſions of thoſe that hear them, and leave them as ignorant and unchanged as ever.

BE much with GOD in prayer. Be ſtriving and wreſtling with him who is the *Father of lights*, and the *God of all grace*. As thoſe who are moſt exerciſed this way are the moſt skilful miniſters, ſo they are the moſt uſeful ones. Your great Lord and Maſter was frequent and fervent in prayer; and ſo muſt you, if you would do any good. If you neglect GOD, or are but ſlight in your dealings with him in this way, you will deprive yourſelves of his aſſiſtance; and if you want that, you want the main. You will get more this way than you can hope to do by any other means. Many complain of want of ſucceſs and ſeem to lament it that they are of ſo little uſe; but if they would enquire into the cauſe of it impartially, would not their conſciences tell them, that they have been too remiſs in prayer? Sure I am that if you are really deſirous of being uſeful, you will not ſuffer yourſelves to be negligent of ſo neceſſary a means. You can hardly exceed in this matter.

BE continually increaſing your ſtock of knowledge: It was the great apoſtle's advice to *Timothy*, that he ſhould *give himſelf to reading*: That he might be continually furniſhed. And better advice I cannot give to you. The larger your ſtock of knowledge is, the more capable you will be of being uſeful. You will find in the courſe of your miniſtry, that you will have occaſion for all the knowledge you can get. You will eaſily ſuppoſe I mean divine knowledge; for that is moſt neceſſary for a miniſter, and is his moſt proper qualification. The moſt of your time ſhould be applied this way. Whilſt you are in

your ſtudies, ſearching for knowledge, you are in GOD's way; and you may depend upon it, that he will bleſs you with a more enlarged underſtanding: Thoſe accompliſhments muſt now be got in a way of ſtudy and diligence, which were formerly given in an extraordinary way. Thoſe that neglect theſe, do but tempt GOD, and are not very likely to profit their people.

BE exemplary in your converſations. Let your lives be teaching and inſtructive. Let the life and power of religion be ſeen in you. Let nothing be ſeen in you that any may faſten upon to reproach and blame you for: And let every thing be ſeen in you that is commendable. Let your lives be a confirmation of the truth of your doctrine; and it will indeed be the beſt confirmation of it to the minds and conſciences of others. The world expects an exactneſs of converſation from miniſters. Some indeed expect too much, and look for more than is ordinarily poſſible. They will not make an allowance for thoſe infirmities and imperfections, which the human nature is incident to in the preſent ſtate. They will not admit, that miniſters ſhould be men of like frailties with themſelves, and will therefore cenſure thoſe things which are tolerable. But yet an exemplary converſation is very neceſſary in them, and the greateſt care ought to be taken about it. Your uſefulneſs will in a great meaſure depend upon it. When miniſters are irregular in their conduct, and but cold and formal in the practiſe of religion, as they expoſe themſelves to contempt, ſo it muſt needs leſſen their uſefulneſs. It will be a temptation to perſons to think that they do not believe the truth of what they ſay. They will think, and but too juſtly, that they act but an hypocritical part, and this is certainly a very vile one.

KEEP up a good order in your families. Let the ways of your houſhold be ordered wiſely.

Your

Your houſes eſpecially, ſhould be like churches for the good order which is in them. They ſhould he nurſeries and ſeminaries of religion. The families of miniſters are very much obſerved by the world, and therefore there ſhould be a perfect regularity in them as much as may be. The children and ſervants of miniſters ſhould be different from others, as far as they can influence them. Your houſes ſhould be eminent for prayer, for reading, for peaceableneſs, for humility, *&c.* This will not a little contribute to your uſefulneſs: As a defect herein will leſſen both your character and your uſefulneſs.

You muſt be eaſy of acceſs. You muſt give all encouragement to your people to come unto you: And ſo carry yourſelves to them, as to avoid all appearance of an affected diſtance. You muſt be eaſy of acceſs to the meaneſt, as well as to thoſe that are in better circumſtances. Let not any ſuch have an occaſion given them to think themſelves ſlighted by you. As the ſouls of the meaneſt of your flock are as precious in themſelves as the ſouls of others, and ſhould be as dear to you; ſo they ſhould have the ſame liberty of acceſs to you, and ſhould be treated by you in the ſame manner. As this is a thing that will very much recommend you, and conciliate to you a more univerſal eſteem, ſo it muſt needs very much farther your uſefulneſs. Your great Lord and Maſter was acceſſible to the meaneſt; he was free, and friendly, and converſible to them; and you ſhould be like him.

You muſt be patient and gentle. You muſt bear with the frailties and weakneſſes of your people; with any thing that is tolerable; and not ſeverely animadvert upon them. There is a great deal of difference in thoſe that belong to a miniſter's charge with reſpect to their tempers, their education, their capacities, *&c.* All have not a temper alike, or a capacity alike; nor have the

ſame meaſure of prudence, or the ſame degree of grace. As there is a difference in theſe reſpects, ſo you will have occaſion for the exerciſe of your patience in many reſpects. There will be ſome things which will be diſagreeable to you. In ſuch caſes you muſt make allowances, and muſt learn to bear, and to be moderate; and you will find it of great uſe to you ſo to do and to be. If you ſhould be rigorous upon every occaſion, you will both diſcourage and provoke them, and ſo hinder your eſteem and uſefulneſs among them.

BUT there are ſome things of another nature, which I would take the liberty to offer to you; which I hope will be of no ſmall ſervice to you; and will contribute, if not to your ſucceſs and uſefulneſs, yet to your chearful and ſteady going on in your work. I will be but brief in them, becauſe I would not detain you too long. You will meet with many diſcouragements, and many temptations in the exerciſe and courſe of your miniſtry. And you muſt expect them and prepare for them.

OFTEN call to mind the work of this day. Let your ordination vows and engagements be often recollected, and as frequently urged and preſſed upon your own conſciences; that they may have that weight and authority with you which they ought to have. A frequent renewing the remembrance of them, will keep up that ſenſe of them, which you now, as it is to be hoped, have, and will excite and conſtrain you to a conſtant diligence. As the frequent and ſerious remembrance of your baptiſmal covenant will cauſe that to have a conſtant influence upon you, and more ſtrongly engage your endeavours to anſwer the obligations and ends of that covenant: So the frequent revival of your miniſterial covenant, will have no ſmall influence upon your miniſterial diligence and faithfulneſs; and more ſtrongly quicken

quicken and engage your endeavours to anſwer the ends of it in all things.

ENDEAVOUR to fortify yourſelves in the beſt manner you can againſt all diſcouraging incidents and occaſions. As we hinted to you but now, you will meet with many of them: You muſt make full account of them. Both the devil and the corruptions of men, will create you a great deal of trouble and oppoſition, as well as they have done to thoſe that have gone before you: And the more diligent and faithful you are, your diſcouragements and oppoſitions will be the greater. Do not expect to meet with that kind treatment, which your office and work deſerves from thoſe that receive the benefit of your labours; you will not only be defeated of that ſucceſs which you may be ready to promiſe yourſelves; but you will meet with many things worſe. Some will be captious, and apt to find fault. Some will be touchy and apt to reſent your faithful dealings with them. Offences and ſcandals will ariſe. There will be diſorderly walkers. Others will be ſtubborn, and will not ſubject themſelves to that diſcipline which JESUS CHRIST has inſtituted in his church, and which ought to be exerciſed by you. You will find yourſelves diſappointed in the good hopes which you might have of ſome. Many will deſert you, and walk no more with you. Some may turn aſide unto errors. Some out of humour and reſentment will withdraw your juſt maintenance from you. Others will be apt to create diviſions, and to ſow the ſeeds of diſcord. Theſe things, and others of the like nature which are likely to befal you, will occaſion many ſad thoughts of heart to you, and many ſecret mournings before GOD. They will be a temptation to you, and a ſtrong temptation too, to deſert your work. As you have need to be well fortified againſt theſe things, ſo it ſhould be your care to fortify yourſelves by all conſiderations

rations that may be proper, that your hearts may be reſolved, and your hands may be ſtrengthened. Of all perſons miniſters have the greateſt need to be well fortified.

OFTEN think of the encouraging promiſes which your great Lord and Maſter has made. Labour to make theſe more familiar to you, and to have them always preſent with you. He has given you them for your encouragement, and you muſt derive your greateſt encouragement from them. It will be a great ſupport to you, if you eye them by faith. Were it not for theſe promiſes, and the hopes which may be drawn from them, no one would take up the work of the miniſtry, or be able to bear up under the difficulties and diſcouragements that do attend it. He has promiſed to aſſiſt and to reward his faithful miniſters, and to do both theſe in a diſtinguiſhing manner. He has promiſed to aſſiſt you. *Lo, I am with you,* ſays he that knows their frailty and weakneſs, and foreſaw all the diſcouragements they would meet with. And he will reward them: They ſhall not loſe their reward from him, whatever they may do from men. If you are faithful, theſe ſhall certainly be made good to you. Think of theſe, and you will find yourſelves carried above all diſcouragements. As the promiſe of the FATHER, was that which encouraged JESUS CHRIST under the difficulties of his work, ſo the promiſe of CHRIST will encourage you, and ſhould encourage you.

Matth. xxv. 20.

REMEMBER that the eye of him whom you ſerve is continually upon you. JESUS CHRIST walketh among his churches and obſerves them. He obſerves in a peculiar manner the behaviour and conduct of his miniſters. And he obſerves their aims and ends too. There is no neglect, no miſmanagement, which they can be guilty of, but is obſerved by him. Let this be ſeriouſly

and frequently thought of by you. This will awe you, and have an influence upon your watchfulneſs and care. We are never likely to forget ourſelves ſo much, as when we forget that we are under the inſpection of JESUS CHRIST: When we forget this, we loſe that reverence which we ſhould have of him, and that is likely to iſſue in too great a degree of remiſſneſs.

BE thankful for any meaſure of aſſiſtance or ſucceſs, which you have. Take notice of the aſſiſtance that is afforded to you by an humble acknowledgment of it, to him from whom you have received it. And be thankful for any ſucceſs that you have had. Altho' you may not have ſo much as you could wiſh of this kind; yet bleſs him for what you have, and give him the glory of it. A thankful acknowledgment of theſe things will be the way to have them continued and increaſed.

TO ſum up all; make full proof of your miniſtry. *Approve yourſelves workmen that need not be aſhamed.* Act ſo, that *no man may deſpiſe you*: That the miniſtry ſuffer no contempt in you, but that you may maintain the honour of it. Let it be your ambition not to gain popular applauſe, but to approve yourſelves to JESUS CHRIST, and to the conſciences of thoſe that ſit under your miniſtry. So act, as that you may finiſh your miniſtry with joy, and give a good account of it to him from whom you have received it.

THUS I have with plainneſs and ſincerity repreſented to you thoſe things which I hope will be of uſe to you. I have not ſaid all that might be ſaid; but given to that which has been ſaid all that force and ſtrength which might have been given to it. Your own thoughts will be able to ſupply that defect, and your diligent peruſal of the Scriptures

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